

No Better Course?

We came as boys: (Sweet joy of flight, pursue!
Slip earth's surly bonds, fly up the burning blue!)*
Our purpose high, to prove that we could fight -
knights of the air - for freedom, nation, right

We trained as youths, all eager to proclaim
our ferocity in warfare, our deadly aim
Hitler gone mad, his foaming, gnashing bite
adrenalized our blood - Nazi demons in our sights

We battled as men - some wounded, many dead -
bone-tired, debriefed, then fitfully to bed
Blinding firestorm visions slashing through our heads
"Bombs gone, Skip!" Death, devastation, dread

Old are we now, reflecting on war's savage power
to maim and kill – we boast no vengeful hour
Ever more persistent, a small voice pleads today
"Is there no better course, no peaceful way?"

As twilight falls on this short, mortal day
guide us to love and to quiet nights, we pray
May the wisdom wrung from bloody strife, Lord please
be the shepherd of our children's lasting peace

A poem by Dennis C. T. Bullen, 1922 – 2002, a Canadian World War II veteran who served as a Lancaster navigator with a Canadian crew in the RAF's Bomber Command, Squadron 625. They flew 32 missions together.

*See the poem entitled, High Flight, by John Gillespie Magee, Jr